DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 033 156 UD 007 010

By-Mattleman, Marciene S.; Emans, Robert L.

The Language of the Inner-City Child: A Comparison of Puerto Rican and Negro Third-Grade Girls.

Pub Date [67]

Note-8p.

EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.50

Descriptors-Females, Grade 3, Language Development, Language Fluency, *Language Research, Language Styles, Language Tests, *Negroes, *Oral Communication, *Puerto Ricans, Syntax, Test Results

Identifiers-Dailey Language Facility Test

The oral language differences between Negro and Puerto Rican youngsters were compared in the hope that the study would be relevant to curriculum modifications for specific populations. Subjects (Ss) were five Negro and six Puerto Rican third grade girls in inner city classrooms. The facility of Ss in language use independent of vocabulary and specific information was measured by the Dailey Language Facility Test. Scores were obtained for language facility, syntactic structure, and fluency. The median scores on language facility were 14.5 for Puerto Rican Ss and 20.0 for Negro Ss. On syntactic structure Puerto Rican Ss used twice as many fragments as Negro Ss. Fluency was greater for Negroes as shown by the median total number of words--289 for Negro Ss compared with 81 for Puerto Ricans. (NH)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

ED033156

E

UD 007 010

THE LANGUAGE OF THE INNER-CITY CHILD: A COMPARISON OF PUERTO RICAN AND NEGRO THIRD-GRADE GIRLS

Marciene S. Mattleman and Robert L. Emans
Temple University

Much of the literature and research in education and the social sciences today is concerned with populations designated as "culturally deprived", "culturally different", "disadvantaged," "sub-standard" and the like. Regardless of the terminology, Kaplan (1963) suggests that we are referring basically to two characteristics: (1) those in lower socioeconomic strata, and (2) those deficient in cultural and academic strengths - the latter usually a consequence of the first factor.

Riessman (1962) reports alarming figures on the relative increase of the culturally different in our fourteen largest cities. According to his findings, one of every three children in the 1960's belongs to this category. Hence, many urban areas are now engaged in curriculum change in order to compensate for deficiencies that deter children from school success. Ausubel (1963, p. 455) states:

> A curriculum that takes the readiness of the culturally deprived child into account always takes as its starting point his existing knowledge and sophistication in the various subject matter areas no matter how far down the scale this happens to be.

Because of concerns in the area of curriculum for culturally different children, this project was undertaken. Before curriculum objectives can be determined or revisions instituted, our belief is that studies should be done in order to find out what specific differences there are within inner city populations. Since much schooling comes through interaction with language, it was in this area that we began.

PURPOSE

In this investigatory study, the oral language of a small number of children from two inner city groups, Negro and Puerto Rican, was compared. Data on facility, syntactic structure, and fluency was gathered to study language in depth from both quantitative and descriptive aspects. Hopefully, the results of this study will lead to further research that will evenuate in curriculum approaches more relevant to specific populations.

PROCEDURES

The sample for this study was composed of the five Negro and the six Puerto Rican girls from a third grade inner city classroom. All the children in this class had been identified as "highly verbal in English" on the basis of teacher and administrator judgements.

The Dailey Language Facility Test was administered to each child individually. This instrument was developed by John T. Dailey, of George Washington University, who is now in the process of collecting normative data on its use. The three picture test was designed to measure facility in the use of language independent of vocabulary and specific information. The correct identification of objects in the pictures is immaterial. Scoring is based on syntactic structure as well as elaboration of ideas. One picture is a photograph, on a print of a Velaquez painting, and one a highly stylized drawing. Administered to a child individually, test directions call for the investigator to show the child one picture at a time. The subject is asked to respond orally to each picture with his own story, or

to describe the picture if he will not tell a story. A tape recorder or direct transcription may be used to record responses. In this study, investigators took dictation directly from the children. For the test a child is given as much time as he feels he needs. Scores for responses vary from 1.0, which indicates a one-word answer, to 9.0 for a creative story. The highest attainable score for each subject is, therefore, 27.0

An inspection of the scores of the subjects suggests reliable measurement in that pictures seemed to discriminate to the same extent, i.e., a single child's scores were consistent for all three pictures. (Dailey, 1966). In previous research by the investigators, reliability with the use of three independent scorers was .77.

The oral language protocols from the Dailey Language Facility was used for syntactic analysis, utilizing a category system developed by one of the investigators in a study in which one hundred eighty elementary school children were interviewed. Classifications include incomplete sentence categories, seven basic sentence patterns, and a two kernel transformation category. Every utterance is classified one time. This system draws largely on those of Strickland(1962) and Loban (1963).

Fluency was measured on the basis of word count from the protocols. Number of words per subject represents a combined total from the three stimuli.

FINDINGS

1. Language Facility

The median score (Table 1) for the Puerto Rican children, as measured by the Dailey Language Facility Test, was 14.5, while the median score for the Negro group was 20.0 from a possible 27.0 points. The Mann-Whitney U Test (Siegel, 1956 pp. 116-127) was used to test whether the two groups were drawn from the same population. The analysis indicated (Mann-Whitney U=6, $p < .06$) that the two groups tended to come from two different populations with respect to language facility.

Table 1

LANGUAGE FACILITY OF PUERTO RICAN AND NEGRO THIRD GRADE GIRLS

Median score		Mann-Whitney	Probability
Puerto Rican	Negro	U	
14.5	20	6	<.06

2. Syntactic Structure

From the data collected regarding syntactic structure, the following results were obtained (Table 2). Puerto Rican children used twice as many fragments in their utterances as did Negro children, 15% as opposed to 7%. While Negroes used the noun - verb pattern in 10% of their speech, Puerto Ricans used this construction 19% of their responses. The noun-verb-noun pattern was predominant in the responses of both groups.

For the linking-verb construction, the Puerto Rican group used more noun-linking verb-noun patterns while the Negro group used linking verbs with adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases completing the patterns. In elaborations of basic patterns, the noun-verb-prepositional phrase and the noun-verb-noun-prepositional phrase, there were no instances in the Puerto Rican group while the Negro group utilized these patterns in approximately one fifth of their responses.

Table 2

TYPES OF UTTERANCES USED BY PUERTO RICAN AND NEGRO THIRD GRADE GIRLS

Categories	Percent of Total Utterances		Z* Score	Probability (one-tail)
	Puerto Rican	Negro		
1. Fragments	.15	.07	1.94	<.026
2. Noun-Verb	.19	.10	1.90	<.029
3. Noun-Verb-Noun	.32	.34	.65	<.258
4. Noun LkV Noun	.23	.09	2.80	<.003
5. Noun LkV Adjective	.03	.04	.37	<.356
6. Noun LkV Adverb	.00	.08	1.87	<.030
7. Noun LkV Prep. Phrase	.06	.02	1.53	<.063
8. Noun-Verb-Noun Prep. Phrase	.00	.07	1.74	<.041
9. Noun-Verb-Prep. Phrase	.00	.14	3.10	<.001
10. Transformations	.03	.05	.76	<.224
	100.00	100.00		

*(Walker and Lev, 1953, pp. 77-79, "Test that Two Proportions are Equal")

3. Fluency

Fluency was measured from raw word count of the protocols. The median total number of words (Table 3) used by the Puerto Rican group was 81, while the median for the Negro group was 289.

As with the language facility data, the Mann Whitney U Test was used to ascertain whether or not the two groups came from the same population. The analysis showed that the two groups were likely to have come from two different populations with respect to language fluency ($U=6$, $p < .02$)

Table 3

LANGUAGE FLUENCY OF PUERTO RICAN AND NEGRO THIRD GRADE GIRLS

Median Number of Words		Mann-Whitney U	Probability
Puerto Rican	Negro		
81	289	3	$< .02$

DISCUSSION

Little research has been concerned with differences within the urban milieu, however nuances appear when variables are investigated. Brooks (1964) uses the term "culturally different" to describe a Puerto Rican child and "culturally deprived" in the case of a Negro. However, it would seem that study must be carried further.

While all of the utterances are perhaps "thing-oriented" or "concrete" in the sense that Goldberg (1963) uses, variations in the language of the two groups were apparent. Loban (1963) found that those who used linking verb constructions were more proficient in language. Negroes, in this study, used more variety in these patterns than did the Puerto Ricans. Both groups used the noun-verb-noun utterances predominantly, however, as did the populations across strata of Strickland (1962) and Loban (1963).

While research in language (Dillard, 1967) has called attention to sensitivities in studying urban language, findings would appear to indicate that more rather than curtailed study must ensue from three standpoints. (1) If a single interview can supply a base for data of such a varied nature, this would seem a worthwhile diagnostic tool for the classroom teacher as well as the researcher. (2) Perusal of the data from the protocols points to the need for analysis of phonological as well as syntactic elements of speech so that a more complete picture of oral language can be studied. (3) Directions from this investigation indicate that more research is necessary with greater numbers of informants. Perhaps with more, and more specific data, urban populations will be identified by characteriestics rather than euphemisms and more differentiated curriculum can be developed

REFERENCES

Ausubel, David P., "A Teaching Strategy for Culturally Deprived Pupils: Cognitive and Motivational Consideration", The School Review, vol. 71, no. 4, Winter 1963.

Brooks, Charlotte K., "Some Approaches to Teaching Standard English as a Second Language," Elementary English, XXXXI, 7, Nov. 1964.

Dailey, John T., Test Administrator's Manual. Unpublished. 1956.

Dillard, J.L., "A New Problem for the Inner City Language Teacher" Washington: Center for Applied Linguistics, Unpublished, 1967.

Goldberg, Miriam L., "Factors Affecting Educational Attainment in Depressed Urban Areas", Education in Depressed Areas, ed. by Harry Passow, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963.

Kaplan, Bernard A., "Issues in Educating the Culturally Disadvantaged", Phi Delta Kappan, vol. XLV, no. 2, Nov. 1963.

Loban, Walter D., The Language of Elementary School Children, NCTE, Champain, Illinois, 1963.

Riessman, Frank, The Culturally Deprived Child, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1962.

Siegel, Sidney, Nonparametric Statistics for the Behavioral Sciences. N.Y.: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1956.

Strickland, Ruth G., "The Language of Elementary School Children: Its Relationship to the Language of Reading Textbook and the Quality of Reading of Selected Children." Bulletin of the School of Ed. Indiana U., Vol. 38, No. 4, July, 1962

Walker, Helen M. and Joseph Lev, Statistical Inference. N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1953.